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# Minutes

## Board of Natural Resources Meeting

April 4, 2006  
Natural Resources Building, Olympia, Washington

### BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Terry Bergeson, Superintendent of Public Instruction  
Ted Anderson, Commissioner, Skagit County  
Bruce Bare, Dean, University of Washington, College of Forest Resources  
Daniel J Bernardo, Dean, Washington State University, College of Agricultural, Human, and Natural Resource Sciences  
Bob Nichols for Governor Christine Gregoire  
Doug Sutherland, Commissioner of Public Lands

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### CALL TO ORDER

Chair Sutherland called the meeting to order at 9:10 a.m. on, Tuesday April 4, 2006, in Room 172 of the Natural Resources Building.

### APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION: Ms. Bergeson moved to approve the March 7, 2006, Board of Natural Resources Minutes.

SECOND: Mr. Anderson seconded.

ACTION: Motion passed unanimously.

### EASTSIDE OLD GROWTH STUDY

John Viada, Gretchen Nicholas, and Tim Vugteveen came forward to present the Eastside Old Growth Study.

Ms. Nicholas began by reviewing slides from the PowerPoint presentation:

Capital Budget Proviso, Section 905, 2004 ESHB 2573, required the following:

- Convene panel of scientists to define old growth
- Inventory and map old growth on state lands
- Complete by June 2005
- Publish notification of proposed cutting or removal of trees or stands 160 years of age or older

Old Growth Definition Issues Identified:

- Old growth is not defined tree by tree; it is defined by the presence of structural components in a stand such as large live trees, snags, fallen trees, and a range of tree diameters.
- These structural components develop at different rates on different sites
- Past definitions have relied on specific thresholds of each component, leaving out stands that were deficient in one component, that were nevertheless structurally old growth.

- The committee developed the “Weighted Old Growth Habitat Index” to avoid this problem by comparing all stands to an old growth reference condition.

#### How Does the Index Work?

- Number of snags per acre
- Amount of down wood per acre
- Number of large trees per acre
- Diameter diversity (a surrogate for canopy layers)

#### Conclusion Reached Concerning Eastside Old Growth:

- The Department does not have reference condition for old growth on the Eastside necessary to construct a definition
- Existing definitions are inadequate for state lands
- Past stand replacement fires have left old growth unevenly distributed across the landscape
- Once defined and identified, old growth forests on the Eastside would require management to maintain them

Ms. Bergeson asked if the index needed to be redefined for the Eastside.

Ms. Nicholas said there was not an index for the Eastside yet, and it would be a little more complex due to the grouping of species assemblages. However, it would be completed.

Mr. Nichols asked about diameter diversity related to the index.

Ms. Nicholas explained that as a stand evolves into old growth condition there are multiple layers of understory. In the inventory the layers aren’t measured but the diameter diversity helps identify the layers.

#### Capital Budget Proviso, Section 189, 2006 ESSB 6384:

“...the department shall...develop a definition for old growth trees and stands located east of the crest of the Cascade Mountains using attributes measured in DNR inventory plots...”

DNR will conduct an inventory of old growth stands, based on the definition: “...*The inventory must include:* maps that illustrate the distribution of forest stands containing old growth ponderosa pine, dry mixed conifer species, and pine-oak plant associations, including sites with residual old growth ponderosa pine trees...”

Until the completion of the inventory...the department...may not cut or remove any Douglas fir, ponderosa pine, or larch trees from state lands located east of the crest of the Cascade Mountains if the tree is one hundred sixty years in age or older and has diameter of twenty eight inches or more measured at breast height, unless...necessary to prevent an imminent physical or ecological hazard or otherwise satisfy a safety concern.”

#### Anticipated Timeline for Eastside Old Growth Definition and Inventory Process:

Winter – Spring 2006:

- Convene panel, define scope, refine ecological/regional parameters (Plant Association Groups).

Summer 2006 – Summer 2007:

- Draft and test reference conditions, draft and test screening tools, draft risk/vulnerability scale.

December 2007:

- Deliver definitions, report, maps and inventory, including priority rating based on structure and risk.

### The Old Growth Definition Committee

An Independent Science Panel:

- Dr. Jerry Franklin, University of Washington (Chair)
- Dr. Miles Hemstrom, USFS PNW Research Station
- Dr. Bob Van Pelt, University of Washington

### Other Team Members:

- Joe Buchanan, WDFW Representative
- Sabra Hull, DNR Representative/Project Coordinator
- Rex Crawford, DNR Eastside Ecologist
- Walt Obermeyer & Steve Curry, DNR Data Stewards

### Eastside Old Growth – A Different Set of Challenges

- Fire Suppression has left current Eastside forests vulnerable to insects/disease and stand replacement fires due to overstocking and species composition.
- If the agency desires to maintain existing old growth forest on the Eastside in the forest types identified in the 2006 legislation, management will be required to sustain them.
- Current management is designed to address overstocking, species composition, and to conserve important older forest elements.

### Next Steps

- The legislation takes effect July 1, 2006. All sales sold after then will be consistent with the legislation until there's a definition.
- During the legislative discussions, DNR was asked to review four pending timber sales.
- Adjustments were made in three of the four sales. The Lone Ranch timber sale did not change.
- Lone Ranch Timber sale is an example of Eastside management that protects and restores historic conditions.

Ms. Bergeson asked when a stand becomes a forest.

Ms. Nicholas said five acres.

Ms. Bergeson commented that when DNR staff brings back the results from the analysis, the Board would have a better idea, of how to manage old growth and older forests on the Eastside.

Mr. Sutherland said these definitions and clarification would be brought to the Board sometime in Summer of 2007.

Mr. Viada talked about Northeast timber management stating that all sales are designed and prepared following the current Legacy Tree procedure and retention with the intent of mimicking natural disturbance regimes. By designing sales in this way DNR can achieve and sustain the challenging multiple goals of having fully functional ecosystems while still providing income for the trusts in perpetuity.

- Minimizing the visual impact of the early seral forest growth stage
- Establishing /Maintaining vertical structure
- Maintaining habitat diversity
- Mitigating many of the negative impacts of traditional clear cutting

### Legacy Tree Retention

- Legacy Procedure provides direction to achieve long term forest health and to maintain future management options
- Retain 7% of the dominants and co-dominants. Estimate leave tree amounts based on the number of live trees that are at least 12" dbh.

- Retain at least three 24" dbh or larger Ponderosa, where available.
- Do not remove more than one half of the Ponderosa trees that are larger than 24" dbh over any 20-year period.

Mr. Viada introduced Roy Cusick, a DNR Forester. He informed the Board that Mr. Cusick has been with the Department for about six months and that the Lone Ranch Timber sale is his first.

The history of fire suppression has allowed the establishment of more shade tolerant species (like Douglas fir) that are more susceptible to disease and stand replacement fires.

- Many of the large diameter Ponderosa Pines remain
- The establishment of Douglas fir continues to impact the health and vigor of large diameter pine components
- Douglas fir requires a much higher level of available moisture to grow
- End result is that Douglas fir can out-compete the existing Ponderosa Pine and shades out any potential regeneration of early seral western larch or ponderosa

Without intervention by fire or timber management, the fire resistant Ponderosa Pine is out-competed by the Douglas fir and slowly is replaced by high density, small diameter, and stagnant stands.

Some areas within Lone Ranch Timber Sale area still contain healthy clumps of Ponderosa Pine capable of providing future large diameter components within the desired future stand.

Western larch is also present within the Lone Ranch sale area. This is also an early seral, fire and disease resistant species also favored in the Douglas fir plant associations.

Harvest prescription preserved all large diameter Ponderosa Pine and Western larch. In some cases, decisions were made to remove some of the Douglas fir posing a risk to other large diameter components.

#### Decision Criteria

Species considerations:

Proximity

- to health risks
- to other leave trees

(Size, crown ratio, unique structure, location on slope, value)

Without implementing the unique harvest prescription remaining large diameter components remain at a high risk of mortality caused by fire and or competition. In the event of a wildfire disturbance, the entire stand, including the large diameter components of a stand, are at a very high risk. Management can reduce the risk to valuable components.

Mr. Vugteveen referenced a photo that showed a previous timber sale completed in 2005. He said it was a good example of how the strategy is being implemented in these plant associations lowering the risk to the valuable Ponderosa Pine and closely mimicking the periodic, lower intensity events. The existing conditions found within the Lone Ranch Sale area are very similar to what this sale looked like prior to harvest implementation. The desired condition is regeneration with reserves.

Mr. Vugteveen discussed the Lone Ranch Timber Sale. He stated that the sale is approximately 102 acres, four units, even aged management, 2,186 MBF, 91% Douglas Fir, with a minimum bid=\$319/mbf.

Mr. Vugteveen talked about Lone Ranch stating that a lot of the large diameter Ponderosa pine that survived the last catastrophic fire is still standing. He said the establishment of Douglas fir continues to impact the health and vigor of the large diameter components.

Ms. Bergeson asked about Western Larch.

Mr. Vugteveen responded that Western Larch is similar to Douglas fir as far as the demand and structural integrity. He explained that when purchasers buy sales on the Eastside, Western Larch is lumped in with Douglas fir sorts, and essentially it's the same bid price and they go to the same mills.

Mr. Viada added that the Western Larch is a deciduous conifer.

Mr. Vugteveen stated that without intervention by fire or timber management the fire resistant Ponderosa Pine is out competed by the Douglas fir and is slowly replaced by high density, small diameter, stagnant stands. He explained that the prescription for the Lone Ranch sale is to leave all Ponderosa Pine and Western larch. He discussed volume saying that the current condition may provide higher volume per acre in the short term because of the high-density stocking. Even though the trees aren't large they are in a size class that purchasers are interested in. However, the volume and value becomes less stable over time due to several risk factors.

Mr. Nichols commented that the Sustainable Harvest Calculation created a healthy forest structure and it seemed to him that this was being applied to this sale, but not being characterized as such.

Mr. Vugteveen said that the sale appears healthy at this time but it's not sustainable due to the risk factors such as wildfire, mistletoe, and root rot. He said that when he refers to managing for a healthy forest structure it's more related to stocking and species composition when comparing the East and Westside.

Mr. Nichols said this is about overall health of the forest not only from a habitat perspective but the ability to sustain and produce revenue for the fiduciary responsibilities as well as provide the other values; social, economic, and environmental.

Mr. Vugteveen talked about the fire history in Lone Ranch stating that there is evidence of the disturbance. He said that the number of large diameter components historically remaining following these large-scale disturbances is fairly low.

## **TIMBER SALES**

Tom Heller came forward to present the timber sales for May 2006.

He gave a brief market update saying that there is a strong regional demand for logs including the following components:

- Log prices at mills are increasing
- Log inventories at mills are low
- Stumpage is increasing slightly
- Ratio of demand to capacity is at 100%

He noted that the market dynamics are changing in Northwest Region.

March 2006 Sales Results:

15 sales offered & 15 sales sold; 65.8 mmbf offered & 65.8 mmbf sold; \$21.4 million minimum bid & \$29.1 million sold; \$325/mbf offered & \$442 /mbf sold; 41% above minimum bid; average numbers of bidders=4.7.

Proposed May 2006 Board Sales:

- 13 sales at 45.1 mmbf
- \$13.3 million minimum bid
- Average \$251/mbf.

MOTION: Ms. Bergeson moved to approve the May 2006, Timber Sales.

SECOND: Mr. Anderson seconded.

ACTION: Motion passed unanimously.

## LAND TRANSACTIONS

Mr. Challstedt came forward to present Tahoma Forest South Trust Land Transfer. The transfer is located in the Tahoma Forest Block in Lewis County, 5 miles southwest of Mineral. The parcel is 230 acres with a timber volume of 16,700 mbf. Timber value is \$5,866,000; land value is \$83,000; total value is \$5,949,000. This structurally complex forest is to be transferred to the Department's Natural Resources Conservation Areas Program for ownership and management. The timber value will be deposited to the Common School Construction Account and the land value reinvested in other land to benefit the Common School Trust.

MOTION: Mr. Anderson moved to approve Resolution #1196.

SECOND: Mr. Nichols seconded.

ACTION: Motion passed unanimously.

## CHAIR REPORTS

Fran McNair, Aquatic Land Steward, came forward to present. She explained that the authorization of mooring buoys on state-owned aquatic lands changed, when in 1996, a mooring buoy license and associated guidance were created to expedite the authorization process. Since 1996, the fees that have been charged for mooring buoy licenses, when applied, have generally been consistent with the guidance. However, after legislative changes to statutes regarding mooring buoy authorizations in 2001 and 2002, new guidance was developed to assist land managers in authorizing mooring buoys. As a part of the development of the new guidance an Assistant Attorney General reviewed it. The agency's guidance was found to be consistent with Washington State laws and rules, except that the Board of Natural Resources must approve the fees charged for licenses. The program is now bringing the fees to the Board for review.

Ms. McNair explained that she was coming before the Board to brief them on a resolution coming next month regarding mooring buoy and boat lift license fees for recreational, scientific, and educational uses (excluding commercial purposes) as detailed in the guidance and summarized below:

- Vessels up to 30 feet in length and all boat lifts: \$175 per year, or \$700 for the entire five-year term of the license.
- Vessels greater than 30 feet up to 600 feet in length: \$275 per year, or \$1,100 for the entire five-year term of the license.
- Vessels greater than 60 feet in length: \$500 per year, or \$2,500 for the entire five-year term of the license.

## **PUBLIC COMMENTS FOR GENERAL ITEMS OF INTEREST**

None.

Chair Sutherland asked if there was anyone else present wishing to make comment before the Board?  
Seeing none, hearing none.

Meeting adjourned at 11:10 a.m.

Approved this \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2006

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Doug Sutherland, Commissioner of Public Lands

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Bob Nichols for Governor Christine Gregoire

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Bruce Bare, Dean, University of Washington

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Ted Anderson, Commissioner, Skagit County

Attest:

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Sasha Lange, Board Coordinator